

The miracle that led to the Beatification of the P. Gerard OMI in 1988

Joseph Gerard's promise to the Basotho nation on his deathbed in 1914 found his final fulfillment in the beatification that took place on September 15 "Don't think going to heaven I'll rest. I'll work for you Basotho", he said.

With the miraculous restoration of Florina Phakela's sight through her intervention in 1928, she kept her promise to help the people she had worked with for 52 years. Father Joseph Gerard, Oblate of Mary Immaculate, was born in Lorena, France, in 1831.

At the age of twenty he entered the Oblate novitiate at Notre-Dame de l' Osier near Grenoble. Three years later he landed in Port Natal to start his African ministry first among the Zulus and then in Basutoland. "The Rider of Maluti " spread the Word of God through Basutoland on horseback. His first conversation was in 1864, who came to him with the words, "I want to be a Christian". Little by little, more and more Basotho joined the Church. At the time of Father Gerard's death, 15.000 Basotho had adopted the Catholic faith and in 1981 the total of Catholics in Lesotho was 650.000.

Florina Phakela's view restoration is a manifestation of Father Gerard's love for his flock. After a serious illness, at six years old, Florina became blind. The doctors assured her mother she'd never see her again. Father Pannerath, the priest in charge of the Rome mission, told his mother to take her to Maseru to pray to Father Gerard. During the ninth led by Father Pennerath, Florina's mother took her to Father Gerard's grave, where she was tied to her neck by a sack of land from her grave and put the P stole. Gerard in his hands.

During a ninth night, a priest appeared to Florina and said, " You will heal, my daughter, and you will see again ". He identified Father Gerard by an ancient photograph as that priest who had spoken to him. Florina kept her eyes until her death in 1982; she didn't even have to wear glasses. In 1940, the first official steps to making healing recognized as a miracle done by God through Father Gerard were introduced when the Church started a diocesan investigation in Basutoland.

New research began in 1956 in Basutoland and in 1976 Pope Paul VI approved the venerability of Father Gerard. In 1986, the Church made the official decision that this fact was a miracle and after further studies, a report was sent to the Pope on the cure that led to John Paul II enactment on June 1, 1987 with a decree this event was a miracle.

This in turn led to the decision to hold the beatification ceremony in Lesotho on September 15, 1988, after which Father Gerard has been recognized as Blessed Joseph Gerard.